

STEP monthly meeting

March 16, 2009

Visiting Nurses Association

In attendance: Ellin Reisner, Wig Zamore, Will Monnin-Browder, Jim McGinnis, Kristi Chase, Robin Duckworth, Karen Molloy, Katie Hargrave, Charlie Denison, Andrea Yakovakis, Bob Nesson, Naomi Slagowski, Ilan Mochari, Heather Van Aelst.

Updates:

Interns for this summer: Grant King is seeking a grant from Harvard, and Alexandra Kaplan will soon find out the funding situation and availability. Steve Kaiser said he would be interested in helping people work on alternative land use solutions, and he could help these students.

Community Assessment of Freeway Exposure and Health (CAFEH) study: The study members are looking for background locations right now. The population of interest is within 300m of the interstate, and a good background location would be slightly farther away and not near a major local road. Tufts researchers did an air monitoring run on Friday to find suitable locations. The equipment van at Tufts is up and running. They are still looking for people who can translate Spanish, Haitian Creole, Cantonese, and Portuguese, up to 15 hours a week. There is a sub-study that is being planned that will look at how effective HEPA filters are at decreasing highway pollution in the homes of people in this study. This proposal will be submitted April 1st.

EOT Green Line Extension meetings: No one present at tonight's meeting attended the meeting in Medford, but we heard there were quite varied comments, and there were about 200 people there. The main focus of the comments at the Somerville meeting was the maintenance facility, and there were 250-300 at that meeting.

Gas tax: There was a hearing at the State House with a lot time spent on backlash on the gas tax. The email will be sent again with the list of people to write in support of the gas tax, and it is also on the website (posted March 5th). A gas tax increase would be a good way for the state to raise enough money to allow the commonwealth to restore federal transit funding.

Action Items:

Tax status: We heard back from the IRS that we don't qualify as a 501c(3). We can appeal the decision, and we could amend our articles of organization to more reflect our educational goals. We can't support candidates for office, but we are allowed to lobby certain bills. Andrea will talk to Peter, the attorney who helped us with our 501c(3) application to see what is a good next step. The next meeting will be our annual meeting, and we can accept our revisions as a group then.

Annual meeting: The annual meeting will be next month. To vote, you need to have paid dues, and need to have attended at least three meetings over the year. The announcement for the meeting should be sent out earlier than usual.

Bylaws changes: Our current bylaws state that officers must be residents of Somerville, and we decided we can vote to change this bylaw at the annual meeting.

The Think Tank That Has Yet to be Named: Katie Hargrave presented her information on The Think Tank That Has Yet to be Named's (Somerville branch) site-based project having to do with city planning and activism. There is a conference at Tufts in April where they will present their current project "'Community' in Question: Conversations and readings on Art, Activism, and Community vis-à-vis the Green Line Expansion." They have been seeking input from all people interested in the Green Line Extension in Somerville and Medford, and looking at the historical record on what happened with the Red Line extension in Davis Square. The end result of the conversation between differing sides would be exposing issues to a broader audience. The project will focus on the connection of art, students, and the community. People suggested that Somerville Arts Council could provide good information to them, especially since ArtBeat was based on the Green Line a few years ago. There have been artists involved in these sorts of issues, and a few of them were brought up for people for Katie to talk to. We told Katie about the Boston Architectural College presentation at SCAT as an example of an intersection of students and the community. On April 4th from 4:00 – 5:30 walk to a few of the proposed stops within walking distance of Tufts, and they would like STEP members to come along to talk about the stops. Katie will send more information to be distributed to STEP. The conference web site is at: <http://convergence-art.com/>.

Land use planning in Inner Belt and other areas around the Green Line extension: Steve Kaiser worked for the state as a MEPA advisor and was involved in transportation planning for the state. He is very involved in the Association of Cambridge Neighborhoods and has done a lot of community activism surrounding land use. He has offered to help come up with land use plans in Inner Belt/Brickbottom. The community has not presented a firm alternative that many people are behind for the development of Inner Belt, but one of the existing alternatives can be used as a starting point. The current alternative preferred by EOT will cut off ~90 acres of developable land from Route 28. The future ability to develop Inner Belt will be dependent on being able to connect the area to Route 28. The best way to go about making plans for Inner Belt with Steve Kaiser would be to have a group of people meet with him with maps of the area, and this planning meeting will be Sunday.

ArtBeat planning: We will attempt to share a booth with the Bike Committee at ArtBeat.

The next meeting, which is the Annual Meeting, will be April 13th at 7:00pm in the Community Room at the Visiting Nurses Association.